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THE ROMAN FATE

AN ESSAY IN INTERPRETATION

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THE ROMAN FATE

AN ESSAY IN INTERPRETATION

BY

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THE following three papers are an attempt to account for the course of Roman history in its main outlines, with criticism of some striking theories recently applied. That I have not treated the subject exhaustively I am well aware. Also that insistence on points that seem to me vital has led me into tiresome repetitions. But I do not see how to avoid this. On the other hand, I have abstained from elaborate notes. The three papers are

I. Elements of strength in large states. The career of Rome considered from (a) political and (b) economic points of view.

II. Recent applications of anthropological and biological Science to the interpretation of human history.

III. Roman history reviewed from this scientific point of view. The tragedy of misfits.

The would-be interpreter walks among pitfalls. Yet interpretation is necessary, and correctors of error are at hand.

W E H

May 1922.

The following three works are directly referred to in these pages, and are cited by the authors' names.

(1) *National welfare and national decay*, by William M^c^Dougall FRS, Professor of Psychology in Harvard University. London 1921.

(2) *Biological fact and the structure of society* (the Herbert Spencer Lecture), by W Bateson, MA, FRS. Oxford 1912.

(3) *An economic history of Rome to the end of the Republic*, by Tenney Frank, Professor of Latin in the Johns Hopkins University. Baltimore 1920.

Other books are cited by quotations illustrating my point of view in this or that matter. But my conclusions were reached independently, before I had consulted these books.

THE ROMAN FATE

I

The growth and decay and dissolution of a great empire is a process that must arrest the attention of all who take an interest in the fortunes of the human race. And, so far as the history of mankind has yet been unrolled, there is no more striking phenomenon than the wonderful story of Rome. It has been said that into Rome the ancient world (the Mediterranean world) was absorbed, and out of Rome modern Europe was evolved. For not only are a number of European states descended from provinces of the Roman empire: the influence of Rome affected lands that never formed part of that empire, and are not popularly classed as 'Latin' countries. Moreover, the invisible hand of Rome is on us still in Law Religion and traditions, and European expansion has carried her influence far beyond the seas.

It is therefore natural that in a thoughtful age, when men are busy investigating present problems and curious in studying the past, convinced that no effect is without a cause, the story of Rome should engage attention. The why and wherefore of the great course of events, from the small beginnings on the Tiber to the vast aggregate ruled by Trajan, and so to the stagnation and shrinkage of the decline and fall, is a fascinating question. Many answers have been given, and good answers, setting forth the causes of Rome's rise and the

causes of her fall. I am not now to attempt to add to these particular explanations, but to ask whether we cannot detect certain main causes operating steadily through the course of centuries, expressing themselves from time to time in differences of detail, but remaining all the time fundamentally the same. My aim is to reduce the sound particular explanations to a simplified form, and if possible to extract therefrom something in the nature of a generalized conclusion, valid as a statement of conditions applicable to humanity at large and not confined solely to the history of Rome.

This may seem a large and over-bold undertaking, and perhaps the first thing necessary is to see clearly what it amounts to. Let me start by inquiring whether it may not be possible to discern certain great and unmistakable elements of strength in political societies, the presence of which promotes growth and well-being, while their loss or absence entails stagnation and decay. No distinction between ancient and modern is to the point here. It is a question of what experience teaches us, and the most modern societies have behind them the longest range of historical experience. The lessons I propose to extract are very simple; but it is the application of platitudes, not the platitudes themselves, that seem to me not devoid of interest.

Importance of scale

As it will be necessary to use the term State in the course of this inquiry, it is necessary to say something by way of definition. For in dealing with the history of Rome we are constantly in danger of confusion arising from expressions that seem precise while they are really ambiguous. And the most important distinction is one based on consideration of

size. Difference of scale soon produces a difference in kind. In the course of ages this truth has gradually received recognition in the development of representative systems. But in ancient times no such solution of the problem of government was reached. Leaving aside mere tribal units, not combined as yet into any union worthy the name of State, we find only two kinds of states (*a*) a city with its territory, (*b*) great empires. In the former, power rests with those who are in the full exclusive sense the citizens, whether they are many or few in proportion to the population of the state. Their franchise is a definite thing, to which privileges and obligations are attached: its duties must be performed and its rights exercised by each citizen in person. Admission of aliens, resident or non-resident, to the civic franchise is normally rare, the civic bond being normally hereditary and religious in character. Under such conditions, states were inevitably small in area and lacking in numerical strength. As a system of political association, this plan was unsuited to survive, and in the end it failed. On the other hand, great empires built up by conquest rose and fell. But the overthrow of one empire by the superior force of another did not mean the extinction of a great self-conscious unit. Rather it was the transfer of so much human and territorial resources from the control of one autocrat to the control of another. The empire-units tended to grow larger and larger. Free Greeks might beat back the aggression of Darius and Xerxes: but their victories hardly shook the ill-knit fabric of the inorganic Persian monarchy. The Great Kings bided their time, and in the end profited by the internal antipathies of free Hellas. When the Mace-

donian directed the resources of a controlled Hellas against Persia, he did, and could do, no more than extend the system of great imperial units. Henceforth the large state, however ill organized, is the unit with a future before it: the small state, however well organized, is an anachronism. In the recognition of this fact, and in attention to the difficulties created by the rise of scale in political units, will be found a great part of the interest of the history of Rome.

Types of large states

Speaking then only of states large enough to render it manifestly impossible for their citizens to take a direct part in the work of government, we may distinguish three main types existing in modern times. We may then try to discover what elements of moral strength are common to them all, and in the process may perhaps find useful material, applicable in criticism of the complicated case of Rome.

The Unitary state may be defined as one in which the parts are merely subdivisions of the whole, not components, but subordinates. France, unified by suppression of the old component Provinces, and cut up into Departments, is the obvious instance of such a state. Its essential feature is not the centralized supreme government (which existed long before 1789) but the abolition of local privileges and customary rights and the establishment of uniformity and equality.

The Federal state arises from the union of units already in being, which are strictly component parts. The first step in its formation is a combination of territorially independent units, each surrendering some portion of its sovranty for the common good. The union may grow by the adhesion of other sovran units,

each adding new territory. Or, if the original union possesses or acquires unoccupied territory, it may develope new members within its own boundaries. In any case, the position of a member within the union depends on definite conditions determined by voluntary agreement and expressed in constitutional law. Now it is impossible from the first to secure that all members of such a voluntary union shall be equal in population and resources, and the problem arises, how to recognize the claim of the several members to equality as units, while making equitable allowance for the superiority of some members to others as furnishing a larger share of the joint power and importance of the whole. The solution of this problem was found in America by the device of a Congress of two Houses representing the two principles: a plan which has stood grave shocks and has made the United States the accepted model of Federalism.

By the side of this model we may see, and must not ignore, a scheme of what I venture to call Pseudo-Federalism. It is that of Germany, formed under the late Empire, and continuing under the present Republic. It is in effect the union of unequal component parts, former states, which retain traces of their past independent (or virtually independent) sovranty. But the vital fact is that one leading state does effectually control the whole, partly by its own strength, partly by the support of its satellites among the lesser states. This combination of Federalism and Hegemony may or may not prove stable in the long run. At present it seems to rest on the material advantages of 'scientific' administration, of which individual citizens are on the

whole convinced. Whether this conviction will prove strong enough to defy the assaults of classes and parties, industrial or political, it is not yet possible to guess. The German union, a reaction against obsolete 'Particularism,' but effected by force, is a contrast to the American union in both framework and origin. But that it means the asserted existence of a solid German nation appears no longer open to doubt.

A third clearly marked type is presented in the Conglomerate State, if I may coin the expression for convenience sake. The term is meant to imply that a political unit of large area has been formed by conquest or dynastic succession or by any means other than voluntary adhesion. Acquiescent submission to a central authority is the outward sign of such union. But the parts have this, and only this, in common. Separated from each other by differences of character, often by geographical position, they can only be taught to combine individual local self-consciousness with common mutual sympathy by a patient and intelligent government, able and willing to work slowly and continuously towards a definite end. Now the central government of such a state is almost inevitably autocratic in form at the outset and so long as the period of territorial expansion lasts. Cohesion and unity of direction are the only available means of guaranteeing the strength needed for a career of expansion. Hence the need of an Emperor: and, as a succession of competent emperors is precarious and in practice soon broken, the necessary development of Bureaucracy, the shadow of Autocracy. But the same human frailty that denies mankind a succession of wise autocrats is sooner or

later fatal to a bureaucratic system. Efficiency itself may produce a temporary contentment, and contentment in turn may breed stagnation ; abuses soon flourish in a stagnant system, and whatever has been gained by mechanical order is speedily lost. I do not think we can point to a single case of a bureaucratic government functioning as a successful reformer or sincerely and intelligently leading the peoples crudely incorporated in a Conglomerate state into the ways of true cohesion and sympathy. Certainly not that of imperial Russia. A power mighty for aggression under the Tsars, we now know that she was all the while rotting at the core, as corruption spread and vitiated the governmental machine. Hence failure and revolution, the end of which is not yet. But the revolution under Lenin is to be rightly viewed as the sequel of the premature revolution under Peter the Great.

Solidarity

It will hardly be denied that the chief element of strength in these, and indeed in all, communities is their solidarity. In proportion as this shews itself in a living loyalty and cooperation on the part of all citizens, the more effective is this strength. Even a mere acquiescent subordination counts for something, as it did in Russia. A docile satisfaction with their system, and pride in its achievements, gave steadiness to German patriotism. A belief that their government is a protector of the interests of the humblest citizen reinforces the sentimental patriotism of France. American self-confidence and pride needs no comment. But the difference between active and passive patriotism shews itself very clearly when a state is subjected to a great strain. We have just seen

France stand and Russia fall. Germany, after an astounding exhibition of power, is not disorganized so far by defeat as to be effectually paralysed: it seems that she carries on her former ambitions behind a veil. Meanwhile the United States Government, with their people at their back, feel competent to devise a policy for the whole world.

Need of organ of expression

Nor is it less clear that, in order to make this solidarity real and this cooperation effective, the citizens of a state must have some practical means of expressing their will. For without their consent the consciousness of common interest and a common duty cannot be lasting: and a mere temporary agreement is no sufficient guarantee of continued strength. A Representative system, the organ developed by modern states, serves the purpose fairly well: the more perfect the representation, the less it is a sham, the more effectually it does so. Counting of heads is indeed a crude procedure, and unwise decisions do and will sometimes result. But on the whole the plan is a success, in particular as a preventive of revolution and civil war. To know for certain that they are in a minority is a cooling influence on even the most ardent fanatics, however strongly they may be convinced of their infallibility. These considerations do not exhaust the question. A popular vote may record a judgment, valid for the time, on a proposal duly submitted to it. This decides what is or is not at present 'practical politics.' But popular assemblies, whether primary or electoral, are not capable of calm and reasoned initiative. They need something on which to pass judgment, and this something is found in the

competing programmes of political parties. To place a given party in power insures the promotion, for a longer or shorter period, of measures of a certain tendency. This arrangement meets an obvious need, providing a body charged with the responsibility of normal initiative, without suppressing the action of individual representatives. Thus the electorate in a modern state is sure of having a policy on which to pass its final judgment by a majority-vote. Thus peaceful reform is made possible. That the striking contrast between the complete representative system of the United States and the sham-system of Russia in recent years illustrates the above remarks, is hardly in need of words.

Intelligence and training

Nor is it necessary to argue at length in support of the view that even in electoral judgments a fair degree of intelligence must be required of electors. Even a sound view of their own several interests is something, and we must not ask too much of the ordinary voter. But Representation has this advantage, that the representative has 'time to turn round,' to become acquainted with the realities of the situation, and conscious of responsibilities that are ever subtly changing. Thus Representation operates as a check on the inconsiderate vagaries of popular electorates. If circumstances change, the intelligent representative must in duty reconsider his pledges: still more must the intelligent elector condone what may seem an unauthorized liberty on the part of his representative. An elastic harmony of this character is only possible in a highly educated community. This point is well illustrated not only in the case of the United States, but in

that of Germany, where the representative system was clogged by rules artificially designed to lessen the effective value of the votes of the poor. Yet so thorough was the education provided by the expert government for all, that no serious inconvenience arose. Even now, in the hour of defeat, much of the effect of this careful training evidently remains.

I have now set out in brief outline what I conceive to be the chief elements of moral strength in great modern states, in virtue of which the community is able to make a good use of its resources and opportunities. The presence of these affords at least some security for justice and good administration at home and the power to pursue a successful policy abroad. So long as they remain unimpaired, their healthy functioning is a means alike of wise conservatism and timely reform. Looking back to the ancient world, I proceed to apply these considerations to the case of Rome.

Rome

In Rome we have from first to last to deal with a City as the vital centre to which all Roman citizens by their franchise belong. It is very hard for a modern man to grasp the full significance of this fact. Rome differed from other ancient cities in the very important point of her treatment of aliens. Her very origin seems to be connected with incorporations, but tradition quite credibly records a long period during which common citizenship did not imply equality of privilege. That equality was at length reached, but only after violent struggles, is probably true enough. Also that equality in principle was never equality in practice; for a new privileged order, based on wealth and influence, took the place of the old nobility of birth.

No democracy of Greek type was formed in Rome. Popular assemblies might be the depositaries of sovran power. But they voted by groups[1] (and these numerically unequal), not in one mass, and under such conditions as to render them normally ineffective (save for elections) as organs of the general will. And the expansion of Rome in Italy soon made them utterly unreal. For all citizens must come to Rome in order to vote in person, and distant residence made this impossible for busy men. That no solution of the difficulty by some measure of a representative character should have suggested itself to the Roman mind may seem strange, when we remember that it had gone so far as to admit aliens, even manumitted slaves, to citizenship. In so doing it had to treat old scruples in a liberal spirit. But it could not take the further step of providing that a citizen's voting power should not be in practice nullified by distance. To explain this limitation of view is not difficult, but would be out of place here. What we are really concerned with is the fact that no means of ascertaining the will of the actual majority of citizens was found in the Roman state, and that this first necessity of popular government became less and less practically possible in course of time.

No popular control

Therefore we need not be surprised that popular control never shaped the policy of Rome. The Assemblies only meeting regularly for election-business, were not capable of more than an intermittent and capricious action in other matters. The Magistrates, normally irresponsible during their year of office, could very seldom be called to account afterwards

[1] Each group had one vote.

for misuse of their several shares of the once regal power. Only under the pressure of some great excitement[1] could the popular will act steadily for a while and get something done. Tradition records the stubborn perseverance, year after year, by which the Commons extorted the concessions of the Licinian laws (367 B.C.). But it is recorded as exceptional. Now surely there was need of some state-organ to maintain the continuity of policy without which Rome could never have risen to become a dominant power in Italy. Such an organ was found in the Senate, the most efficient political body of the ancient world. It was always there, ready to sit at the shortest notice, and could thus deal with urgent business. As a body, it was permanent: the roll of its members was only revised every five years, and a seat in the House was usually held for life. The members were generally men who had held public office, so that whatever knowledge and experience was available for service of the state was collected there. Naturally the influence of the Senate grew. From being the adviser of yearly magistrates it rose to be virtually their director. From being preparer of measures for the decision of the Assemblies, and from being entrusted by them with special powers in emergencies, it gradually assumed functions not assigned to it by law, and during the great period of Roman expansion it became the *de facto* guide and ruler of the state. The control of public finance inevitably rested with it, there being no other body at all competent to discharge that important function.

[1] 'In the Roman Republic it is not safe to infer that a great need or a strong desire felt by a certain class or group eventually manifested itself in a governmental act or law.' Tenney Frank, p. 111.

So long as the Senate remained a pure and patriotic council of state, and the sovran Assemblies generally acted in patriotic harmony with it, the grave defects of the constitution might not render it unworkable. But the expansion of Rome added to the volume of affairs calling for continuous management, and thus increased the patronage and power of the Senate. The conquest and organization of Italy, followed by the long struggle with Carthage, left the Senate in possession of powers which it took over because there was no one else to claim them. The wider foreign policy fell into their hands, and to the outside world the Senate became more and more the representative of Rome. With the acquisition of transmarine dominions, ruled as official departments (*provinciae*)[1], came the power of appointment to honourable posts, which soon became lucrative. Individual ambition and greed developed fast under such temptations. The standard of living rose and the race for wealth set in: and the *de facto* power of the Senate was in the interest of its members turned to account in granting opportunities of glory to be cheaply won, or of enrichment at the cost of subject peoples. All these powers were in strict law liable to be at any moment resumed by the Assemblies as parts of the popular sovranty, which was not openly challenged, but foiled in default of exercise. Nevertheless they remained with the Senate, for the interference of the Assembly on rare occasions was too casual and capricious to have any lasting effect. When

Failure of the Senate

[1] As in the aggregation these were acquired piecemeal, so in the dissolution they were lost piecemeal. Their connexion with Rome was never vital.

at last the period of revolution began, it was indeed found possible to shake the Senate's power. It was found impossible to establish any other civil authority in its stead, and events proved that the only force capable of ruling Rome was one possessed of the control of armies.

Fall of the Republic

Thus the latter days of the Republic were days of party violence and bloodshed. Action and reaction, fitful and futile, left the problems of state unsolved and the state weaker, till Julius Caesar took matters in hand and made an end of the ruinous farce. It was high time that it was ended. As the Roman people could not express its will, and Assemblies were now normally mere gatherings of the idle city mob, corruption and force were the only means of influencing what passed for a popular vote. The senatorial nobility used these means freely, spending vast sums on bribery and shows, and not shrinking from employing their hosts of slaves to intimidate citizen adversaries. And the money needed to support these and other forms of extravagance was not to be found in Italy: it had to be sought in extortion abroad, at the expense of Rome's provincial subjects and client kings. The failure of the Gracchi[1] shewed that reformers could not rely on stable popular support in a struggle with the Senate, interested in present abuses: that the Senate, placed in power by the sword, could not hold its ground, was made manifest in the break-down[2] of the constitution of Sulla. In short, when the need of reform was most urgent, it was also most hopelessly impossible. Things had gone so far that no single act

[1] 133—120 BC. [2] 78—70 BC.

of legislation could be effectual, while steady patient work was beyond the range of practical politics: continuous backing was nowhere to be found.

So ended the Republic. The germs of self-government by the votes of citizens had been sterilized through the impossibility of expressing the popular will by direct voting in a state of large territory. The great state council had succumbed to temptation, and was rotten. The Augustan Empire or Principate[1] succeeded as a necessity, veiling monarchic power, in essence military, under a great show of popular forms. Its unreal make-believe was an ingenious shift, but could not last. Bit by bit the disguise dropped away. Government became more and more bureaucratic in character. The civil wars of 69 AD betrayed the secret that the basis of imperial power no longer lay in the imperial capital. The centre of gravity was to be found in the comparative strength of the great frontier armies. Administration more and more fell into the control of departmental experts, mostly oriental Greek freedmen, and attempts to substitute Roman knights for these clever men of business do not appear to have changed materially the working of the system. It had both the merits and the defects of a machine, and the defects at least did not grow less with time. For even the perfection of routine tends to become a hindrance to salutary change. Moreover this great central organization was operating in a vast area of passive provinces, from which no healthy constitutional stimulus could be received. The native peoples, long deprived of the power of independent action, had

The Principate

[1] 27 BC.

lost the will. Accustomed to look to Rome for guidance and orders, above all for their defence against outside invaders, they were politically dead. Even the internal differences of local communities were referred for settlement to the Emperor; that is, normally to his departmental ministers. The municipal system, by which the provinces were divided into lesser units not all equal in privilege, tended to promote particular interests. In some parts of the empire local jealousies were extreme, but the strong central power kept them in control for an outwardly prosperous period of some 200 years. No doubt evils were at work sapping the vitality of the imperial body; but signs of decay attracted little attention so long as the frontier armies were able to hold at bay the foreign enemies and preserve inviolate the Roman peace.

The age of disaster

Then, in the third century AD, after 200 years of Roman Emperors, came a time of disasters within and without, in which the evils long at work came to a head and the empire seemed to be on the verge of complete dissolution. Wars followed wars on the northern and eastern frontiers. Pretenders headed rebellions in various parts of the empire. Pestilence and famine carried off great numbers of the people and lessened available resources. The northern barbarians were stronger and more confident; and the armies employed to keep them in check were now largely composed of barbarian troops. The revival of the Persian[1] monarchy led to a series of indecisive campaigns. Most emperors of this period spent their short terms of power at the head of armies in the field,

[1] 226—232 AD.

and some were victims of the fickle soldiery who had lately raised them to the throne. The devastation of frontier provinces left the central government more dependent on the resources of those hitherto undisturbed, such as Africa and Egypt. We may fairly infer that these still flourishing lands had to bear an increased share of the economic strain. That the empire did not as a whole succumb under the pressure of its manifold burdens, is a marvel. We can only account for it to some extent by remarking that its external enemies were not united, so that it was still possible to make a stand against them in detail, and that their military systems were on the whole inferior to that of Rome. That the whole governmental fabric did not irretrievably collapse, is even more marvellous. Evidently an important page of internal history is lost. But we have a few detailed facts enough to prove that among the confusions and calamities of the age the central administration did somehow continue in function. It still received appeals from the provincial subjects and gave judgment thereon. It could persecute the Christian movement as being a challenge to imperial unity expressed in the divinity of emperors. It could intensify imperial uniformity by wholesale extension of the Roman franchise in the famous ordinance[1] of Caracalla. And it is above all things notable that the earlier part of this period was the golden age[2] of Roman jurisprudence, in which Ulpian and other great lawyers flourished and often occupied the posi-

[1] 212 AD.

[2] In other words Law, being easily separable from politics, remained the great achievement of Rome.

tion of Praetorian Prefect, the head of the imperial civil service.

The Empire Orientalized

But in the latter part of the period the change really in progress became more manifest, the ruinous debasement of the currency was a symptom of the prevalent exhaustion, and the efforts of warrior emperors could not restore the empire's vital strength. A means of saving it for a time was found in the open recognition of a tendency already long at work, the transition to autocratic monarchy on an oriental model. Ceremony, display, formalities of an elaborate court, a graded hierarchy of official ministers, were leading features of the system. An emperor, secluded and almost unapproachable, issued his orders from behind a screen of obsequious subordinates: his household, his acts and words, his person, all were styled divine. To insure obedience and prevent rebellion, civil and military posts of command were reduced in scale and increased in number. These changes inevitably led to an increased expenditure, and therefore to an increase of the already crushing burden of taxation. And this taxation, owing to the deplorable state of the currency, was largely levied in kind. It was thus most cruel just when the power of payment was at its lowest; for in times of dearth a given quantity of corn represented a greater value. Such in outline was the new model of government devised by Diocletian[1] and developed by Constantine. In order to satisfy competing ambitions, and to provide more efficiently for defence, the supreme authority was organized in four local divisions, each with a departmental sovran. Provision

[1] 284—305 AD.

was made for retirements successions and fresh appointments, in fact for every contingency save the failure of human nature under extreme temptation in circumstances of exceptional trial. So within 40 years Constantine emerged from civil wars as sole[1] emperor. True, the system did not at once die out, but another 70 years found Theodosius ruling[2] alone, after a stormy period of warfare largely defensive in character, and not permanently successful in repelling the barbarians, who were now swarming over the frontiers and indeed settling down in provinces of the empire.

The Decline summarized

After this last reunion we need not follow the political fortunes of the Roman state, the permanent division, the disintegration of the western half, occupied by barbarian invaders, and the continued existence of the eastern half whose capital was the new city of Constantine. It remains to sum up the lesson conveyed by Roman history from my present point of view. From first to last, from the small beginnings on the Tiber to the time when she ruled by the Euphrates and the Clyde, Rome never developed a political organ capable at once of continuous action and peaceful reform. Primary Assemblies, fitful and hampered, were never a practical expression of the sovran people's will in a growing state, and territorial expansion soon rendered them ridiculous. The Senate was practical, but it was ruined by succumbing to the temptations engendered by its own success. Bloody revolution left the victorious army supreme. But an army, able to destroy, cannot create. It can only raise a chief to power, and this enables or compels him to found a monarchy. No make-

[1] 323—337 AD. [2] 392—5 AD.

believe disguises, however congenial to the Roman mind, could dissemble the truth for long. Monarchy, so far as our experience of human history goes, does not easily escape the alternative of becoming either bureaucratic or constitutional: mere personal autocracy is too toilsome, and breaks down through the insufficiency of human powers. Now the material for constitutional government had been destroyed at Rome by the course of her history. So the real ruler had to rule through Ministers, when he could find men suited to his purpose. But Ministers both capable and loyal were not always to be found, and Emperors were soon driven to transact imperial business through the agency of dependents of their own, men highly qualified but not of Roman origin. And the bureaucratic organization once established never died out. A great machine administered the empire. The vagaries of Emperors seldom and slightly interfered with its working. It tended to become more and more mechanical, a system of fixed routine modified by the corruptions of personal greed misusing the opportunities of official power. To us it may stand as a record, a confession that, whatever influence Roman tradition and sentiments may have had on government in past ages, such influence was now at an end. Stagnation and decay was the result.

Economic view

From the political point of view let me turn for a moment to the economic. The early expansion of Rome in Italy was in essence an occupation, the work of the plough even more than that of the sword. The settlement of farmer citizens as owners and cultivators on confiscated lands gave solidity to Roman advances, while a judicious treatment of

conquered neighbours on different scales of privilege minimized its difficulties and dangers. From time to time subject communities were admitted to Roman citizenship. The effective strength of the fabric, based on agriculture, was severely tested in wars with the invading Gauls, with Pyrrhus, with Carthage, and proved equal to the strain. But after the second Punic war things never returned to their old course. A 'back-to-the-land' policy was at best only partially successful, and for this we may discern certain main reasons. These reasons may be generalized as the vital but imperfectly understood relations of capital and labour. To set small-scale agriculture on its legs again, after the devastation of much of the best arable lands of Italy, needed fresh capital on easy terms; and this capital was not to be had. Men with money had learnt to profit by opportunities during the great war, and were not now disposed to finance small farmers, even under the temptation of lucrative usury practised with the aid of rigid law. There were openings for business of a less piecemeal character, and more tempting. Plenty of land was in the market at low prices. Plenty of slaves were to be bought, and no doubt fairly cheap. Contact with Carthage, and the spectacle of her remunerative and probably large-scale agriculture, scientifically managed beyond the standard of Roman experience, opened the greedy eyes of many. So two processes went on side by side. Men with money were buying up land and slaves, and forming large estates worked for profit by slave labour. Small cultivating owners were not returning to resume their interrupted occupation, or were actually driven to abandon the holdings on which they

had maintained themselves and reared their families. Some of these men preferred a soldier's life and served voluntarily in the subsequent wars. But many drifted into Rome and increased the population of the city. Rome was not a great industrial centre, and progressive degradation followed. Eking out a precarious livelihood by the sale of their votes and general dependence on the bounty of the rich, they became a parasitic rabble. Courted by candidates for office, their perquisites grew: in time they were even fed by doles of corn provided by the state below cost price. Now this degrading process went on together with, indeed in connexion with, the change in agriculture. The economic revolution could not be arrested by political action, because political power was steadily passing into the hands of the very men who profited by the new agricultural system. Politics could not be purified, because the remaining independent farmer citizens were not able to appear at Rome time after time in continuous support of measures for the public good. For we must not forget that the districts in which agriculture was being metamorphosed were chiefly if not wholly those easily accessible from Rome, not the uplands in which a scattered peasantry lived on.

Capitalism and slavery

For some 70 or 80 years the great change was at work before the capitalists won their final triumph in nullifying[1] the efforts of the Gracchi. It seems to have undergone some modification in detail. Until the importation of corn from abroad became a serious factor, cereal crops appear to have been raised in considerable quantity by slave labour on

[1] 121—111 BC.

the *latifundia*. But it was soon found that on these lines it was not possible to compete with Sicily and Africa in the Roman market, where sea-transport gave to foreign products, when bulky, a decisive advantage. Hence it was found advisable to devote landed estates to the cultivation of the vine and olive. And this department of agriculture implied a power of waiting for tardy returns, another advantage to the larger capitalist. It is probable that this change led to a reduction in the average size of large holdings, the new tillage being more intensive in character, needing more technical skill in the direction, and being (in the case of vines) largely carried on with use of the mattock and the spade. This modification seems to have been operative in the middle of the second century BC, the time of the elder Cato. And there are signs that there was then still available some supply of free wage-labour. Such help was needed at seasons of special pressure, for instance the harvesting of crops. Thus it was possible to keep the costly slave-staff down to the number required for the ordinary routine labour of the estate. But it does not appear that any changes, abrupt or gradual, favoured the return of the small farmer to the land. After the battle of Pydna in 168 BC, which finally placed the Mediterranean world at the feet of Rome, the prospect open to Roman adventurers of all sorts were immensely widened. Provinces were being acquired, and further spheres of influence opened, and every forward movement brought with it alluring opportunities of gain. The next hundred years saw a great rush of Roman citizens abroad eager to exploit these openings. Some employed a temporary exile in

gleaning the profits to be made by the legal or illegal squeezing of Rome's subjects. Others settled down in the Provinces or client kingdoms, and made fortunes by commercial or financial activities. In any case the power of Rome was at their back, and they used their opportunities with little fear of restraint or resistance. Extortion and usury were not the only means of enrichment. A Roman citizen enjoyed the right of *commercium*, that is of acquiring real property anywhere within the Roman dominions. The non-Roman had no such right valid in Italy. So bit by bit Roman emigrants acquired valuable lands in the Provinces, which they turned to account on the systems of cultivation in vogue. In a later generation the large provincial estates of Roman citizens were a very important feature of the imperial whole.

The Roman Diaspora

The foundation of Roman cities in the Provinces followed in due course, but the outflow of emigrant Romans, tempted by openings abroad, began at once. A man could make a start on a small scale, for instance by petty usury: the money-lender was an ever-present figure in the civilization of the time, and the favour of Roman officials guaranteed him against bad debts. The thrifty usurer soon became a substantial capitalist, and could choose whether to continue his investments abroad or to return home with the prestige of a man of property. And in Rome he enjoyed ample opportunities for deriving a good income from his capital. The system of undertaking state contracts by companies formed for joint-stock enterprise had received a vast extension owing to the current method of state finance. Revenues were farmed out by

auction to the contractors who offered the largest lump sum down and took the risk of profit or loss on their collection. The growing volume of provincial dues brought into being a numerous class of investors, whose speculations generally yielded a rich return. From this class, known as the Knights [*equites*], little real sympathy with a disappearing peasantry could be looked for. At first their main object was to wring concessions from the Senate. So for a time popular leaders were able to engage their support against the ruling nobility; but the selfish interests of capital guided their policy, and eventually led them to combine with the senatorial nobles as a solid party of property. When we remember further that a principal department of commerce in the latter days of the Republic was the slave-trade, in which Roman financiers were deeply interested, we need not wonder that efforts to restore free peasants to Italian land were a failure. Indifference or open hostility of capitalists effectually barred the way, even if the reform had been possible on economic grounds.

Provincial estates

So the system of great estates and slave labour lasted on into the days of the Empire. It was found to pay well in Provinces where large blocks of land could be had at moderate prices, and where soil and other circumstances were favourable. Africa in particular was the scene of much enterprise of the kind. Now vast territorial units of this sort surely needed a very thorough organization, if the non-resident[1] owners were to preserve an effective control and secure a regular income. And there is reason to think that the organization was, at least in many cases, very com-

[1] See for instance Tac *ann* XIV 22 § 5.

plete. So complete sometimes as to give to a great *latifundium* the air of a small principality, in which the private ordinances of the landlord were of far more direct and daily efficiency than imperial laws. But by emperors, concerned for their own security, the exercise of such authority by a subject was naturally viewed with suspicion. A decisive step was taken by Nero[1], who confiscated six estates of this class in Africa and thus added about half of that Province to the imperial crown-lands. These imperial domains, administered by a central bureau in Rome, were already considerable, and tended to increase, and were an important part of the economic fabric of the empire.

Tenancies

Side by side with this process we must note another not less significant movement in Italy, and probably elsewhere also. Letting of farms to tenants was no new thing, but for various reasons only to be guessed it does not seem to have been a common practice. So long as slaves were plentiful, and landlords resident in Rome at the centre of political life were content to draw from their estates such income as their managing stewards could furnish year by year, there was little inducement to have dealings with free tenants. Litigation was avoided, and with it the necessity of employing qualified legal agents to spare the landlords much trouble and worry. The Roman Peace of the Empire lessened the supply of slaves, while Rome as the political centre lost much of its attraction for men who could no longer find free scope for their ambition in the strife of politics. It has been suggested[2], I think rightly, that the combination of these

[1] 54—68 AD. [2] By M Weber, cited in my *Agricola* p 160.

two influences led owners of land to reconsider their policy from a strictly economic point of view. At all events, whatever were the causes, we find indications of a marked extension of the tenancy-system. That its success depended on a sufficient supply of honest and industrious tenants, steady and solvent, is obvious: and it was the deficiency of such tenants that soon caused trouble. Of the anxiety and losses of landlords we have good evidence, and it has been reasonably said[1] that early in the second century AD they were often as badly off as their tenants. Yet tenancies in some form or other were, under pressure of circumstances, destined to be the prevalent feature of the agricultural system.

coloni

We have ground for believing that in earlier times the landlord had the upper hand in the bargain, and that the tenant was very much of a humble dependant, not in a position to refuse services required of him by his lord. His chief fear would be lest he should be turned out of his holding. In the younger Pliny's time[2] the landlord was often the anxious party, fearing that good tenants would not stay while bad ones could not be got rid of without loss. Yet the social prestige of landowning remained, upheld by fashion. And estates in the Provinces seem to have been remunerative. It was now a problem how to combine two vital interests in such a way as to keep the agricultural system at work. For the production of food, always important, was now supremely urgent. The first point was, how to keep the tenant-farmer permanently attached to his holding, which could only

[1] By H Blümner, cited in my *Agricola* p 229.

[2] End of first century AD.

be attained by giving him a prospect of decent comfort and prosperity. The second was, how to find room for the employment of capital in this great industry. We must not forget that imperial taxation in various forms was a general burden on agriculture outside Italy, and that it was an object so to collect the imposts as to keep down outgoings and keep up the net return. Out of the attempt to meet these requirements came a notable development of tenancy-practice, at least on great estates in the Provinces. A large unit of the kind was leased to a man of capital as chief tenant, who ordinarily kept in his own hands the principal or Home Farm, working it by slave labour under a steward. The rest of the estate was cultivated by small sub-tenants on terms which seem to have at least approximated to a common model. The chief tenant was responsible for the collection of imposts due from these sub-tenants as well as for his own rent. His existence was thus a convenience from the taxation point of view, and it was not unnatural that he should be allowed considerable authority. In particular it seems to have been the custom to give him a claim to services of the sub-tenants in the form of occasional labour (*operae*) on the Home Farm at certain seasons of the year. The need of such help to supplement the labour of his regular staff has been referred to above: it would seem that the arrangement was now passing into a recognized usage.

Imperial estates

Whether, as has been[1] suggested, this customary scheme first came into use on the great imperial crown-lands, or whether it began earlier on the Provincial *latifundia* of private landlords,

[1] By the late Prof Pelham, cited in my *Agricola* p 385.

we have hardly sufficient evidence to decide. Nor is the decision of first-rate importance. It is fairly clear that it was soon established on imperial estates and long remained in working order. Its interest here is to be found mainly in its observable tendency, judged by taking the witness of inscriptions (of second and third centuries) in connexion with well-known later effects. That tenants-in-chief would try to get the most they could out of their opportunities, and that their sub-tenants would resist encroachments, was only to be expected. So it was, and strict rules had to be issued to regulate conflicting interests. These imperial ordinances were intended to protect sub-tenants against exaction of services beyond the fixed standard, and the chief tenants against shirking and fraud. No doubt the first object was the more important, for by this time the question of food-supply was one of great urgency. But the enactment of rules was easy: to keep them steadily in force was difficult, owing to the corruption of imperial agents. These could, and sometimes did, connive at misdeeds of chief tenants, who were better able to bribe them than were the sub-tenants. Appeals from the latter to the central bureau at Rome were troublesome, probably expensive, and not certain of success. Success seems generally to have meant only a solemn reenactment of the rules. If, as may have happened, a corrupt official was removed, his successor was soon subjected to the same temptations, and the same weary round might begin again. In the confusion and disasters of the third century this system of contract-plus-checks cannot surely be supposed to have worked with purity and beneficence.

The coloni of the later Empire

No wonder then that at the accession of Diocletian (284 AD) we find the small tenant farmer sunk into a semi-servile condition of dependence. The term *colonus* was fast putting on a new meaning. Starting from its original sense of 'cultivator,' whether owner or not, it had passed through a stage in which it connoted tenancy without ownership, the product of a bargain between two parties alike legally and economically free. The course of events had first embarrassed the ordinary landlord, and then gradually depressed the small tenant. The legal freedom of the *colonus* was now so clogged, and his economic position so dependent on the retention of a holding hampered by conditions liable to be impaired by piecemeal encroachments, that he was no longer his own master. To go was to starve, to stay was to become a serf. It only remained to recognize the situation by positive law, and the transition was complete. This step was taken by Constantine. Henceforth to be a *colonus* signified attachment to a certain plot of ground, together with which the farmer himself was legally transferable. This act, however logical, was really an act of despair. Stagnation in agriculture was now consummated by law, and the frantic efforts of the government to keep up or even extend cultivation could not extricate the empire from the economic mess into which it had drifted.

Review of causes

We can hardly shut our eyes to the conclusion that a potent cause of the decline and fall of Rome is to be detected in the fatal absence of any non-revolutionary means of reform. From first

to last (for we need not dwell on the details of collapse) good intentions on the part of individuals were nugatory for lack of any organ through which they could find effect. Whatever hope there might have been in the pure and clear expression of the popular judgment (perhaps not much) perished with the decay of a citizen peasantry; and the corruption of politics sterilized all efforts at revival. The mechanical efficiency developed under the Empire was no remedy. It only served to conceal, and in some degree to retard, the decay of vitality. The real Rome was past, virtually dead, long before the monarchy became an oriental despotism. The point on which I am trying to insist is this; whatever particular evils tended to sap the vitality of the Roman state, we must bear in mind that there was no means of attempting to cure them by any effort of the human will. To contemporaries in Rome, as in all states in all ages, it was only the pressing evils of the moment that drew their attention and called for redress. A tranquil diagnosis, and a patient endeavour to remove the deep-seated causes of trouble, were impossible. In all states it is the strain felt by individuals that furnishes the motive power for any attempted reform: and individuals cannot wait. Therefore therapeutic measures are inevitably crude. And, however well meant or even well designed, they too cannot be instantaneous in effect. Still, given time, the experience of some improvement achieved may generate a readiness to wait awhile and watch for opportunities of carrying reforms further bit by bit, till at length a considerable result is attained. But such progress, I repeat, is only possible under a steady advance of public opinion able and willing to

express itself freely in some regular and non-revolutionary manner. Modern practice, fairly successful in spite of imperfections, supplies the needful machinery by submitting programmes to electorates, who in turn delegate the function of final judgment to representatives who remain in session for considerable periods and so enjoy the advantage of time to reach calm and rational decisions. But in antiquity no such delegation of responsibility was known. The voter was himself an actual legislator. And there was no Ministry holding office until turned out, and therefore no Opposition bidding for office, putting forth rival 'platforms' for mature consideration as competing schemes of party policy. The normal procedure was a popular vote for or against a particular measure proposed by this or that individual. Personal interests and passions naturally determined the result; which was, not to entrust the guidance of policy to deputies representing the majority, but to pass or reject a law by direct action of the voters present. I need not comment on the working of such a system in the little Greek democracies. Rome outgrew the possibility of drawing the greater part of her citizens to the Assemblies, and even in the Assemblies themselves the numerical majority did not prevail. No public opinion[1], organized and consistent, could arise among her widely scattered citizens. Popular sovranty could only manifest itself in occasional assaults on the one practical authority, the Senate: and the Senate, whatever its merits, was not a body suited to undertake reform.

[1] 'It is upon public opinion, moulded by tradition, that all free governments must in the last resort rely.' Bryce, *Studies*, essay III, vol I p 234.

Therefore, if we detect evils undermining the strength of the Roman state, and find no successful efforts to remove them, we must surely make large allowance for the defects of a political system under which the noblest endeavours were doomed to almost certain failure.

II

Explanations of failure, old and new

At this point we are met by an old ghost that used to haunt historians, which is becoming active again in a new form. So long as a pious resignation dominated whatever thought humanity expended on itself, it was easy to attribute the destinies of states and peoples to divine ordinance. Mankind in their various groups had a pre-ordained course to run. What that course was in any case to be, they did not know: their duty was to face it, and to be satisfied that the result was for the best. Patriotic ingenuity noted the virtues to which successful peoples might point as explanations of their own success, and failing peoples deplored in retrospect the vices to which they imputed their own failure. The story of Rome illustrates both these phenomena. But in the case of Rome (and not of Rome only) they appear in a very simple form. Prosperity suggests confidence, consciousness of decline insinuates despair. There is no sincere belief in possible revival through the people's united effort, for the people as a people, a living self-conscious unit, does not exist. In the vast Roman subject world patience means drifting under the fitful guidance of remote rulers. And this helplessness is in effect a practical fatalism, whether it turns its gaze to

divine powers or yields to an impersonal Fate. It has no belief in the power of man to control his own destiny: once started on the downward path, he has only to go on till he reaches the bottom. No wonder that this view has found expression in the once fashionable doctrine, that all states and peoples have their day and are in turn doomed to perish. This implies that the surviving individuals are absorbed as inferior members into some new unit or units, in the ranks of which they disappear. The civilization to which they belonged is simply at an end.

Anthropology

The new attitude towards this question of destiny is influenced not by Religion but by Science. It is anthropological, proceeding by analysis of human qualities and ascertaining their importance and efficiency in producing and assuring human welfare. Upkeep of beneficial qualities is obviously necessary, and this consideration at once calls in the aid of Eugenics. Eugenics is a branch of practical Biology. Hence we now find the biologist claiming a share, and that no small one, in solving the problems of human history. And this cooperation is beyond all doubt a great gain. It follows and tends to develope a change that has come over historians[1] in modern times from the growth of the 'idea of progress.' It is no longer assumed that peoples simply grow old and die. That past civilizations have failed, is evident. But is this a mere matter of course? Must present civilizations pass on to the same inevitable doom? Have not mankind in the experience of ages learnt enough[2] to enable them to avert so pitiful

[1] See Prof J B Bury, *The Idea of Progress*, 1920.

[2] McDougall p 28.

an end? For, that they can by their own voluntary action affect their own subsequent well-being, many instances of successful measures unquestionably shew. That the mere change of economic conditions[1] will not of itself serve to account for the decay of old civilizations, is a just inference from the known facts. Some other and more universal cause must be found, if we are to reach a sound theory.

The new inquirer[2] starts with the general proposition that civilization depends on the quality of the human stuff. If this be sound, organizations and institutions are comparatively indifferent: healthy humanity will make any system work sufficiently well. Civilizations fail because they die off at the top. That is, the supply of best members of a society, those whose leadership gave to that society its healthy social and moral character, fails. As they fail, the society gradually loses not only its character but its recuperative power. At length the decline becomes manifest to all: fatalistically recognized, it leads to the old doctrine of inevitable decay. The new doctrine meets the difficulty by maintaining that failure of the upper strata was not a necessity, or at least is no longer a necessity under modern conditions. For we have learnt that the presence of these upper strata is necessary, and that they can be reproduced: what is needed now is only the will to reproduce them. The upper and more efficient classes are therefore exhorted to multiply freely, while hints are thrown out that a means of restricting the excessive multiplication of the unfit must sooner or later be devised. Such principles at once bring the practical eugenist into

[1] McDougall p 33. [2] Prof W McDougall.

collision with modern Democracy, fanatically hostile to all that savours of inequality and privilege. Yet on his own ground the anthropological sage is unanswerable. His doctrine is clearly for the good of the human race in coming ages. But coming ages have no votes. No philanthropic autocrat exists with power and will to enforce eugenic reform: persuasion is the only road to any measure of constraint, and it will not be achieved tomorrow. Meanwhile eugenic schemes need to be examined from all points of view.

To begin with a certainty, it is the wonderful results recently attained by scientific breeding of animals and plants that has set going these eugenic speculations. And these results have been attained, necessarily, under conditions of ingenious and absolute control. So long as the doctrine of 'survival of the fittest' was applied to mankind in its crudest form, the new principles could hardly get much of a hearing. A modernized fatalism was in fact dominant: now it is challenged. The present position is roughly this. Granted that to breed from the best stocks would be the best thing for any people, and perhaps the only available means of preventing its degeneration and decay—what next? Well, first you have to ascertain, beyond all possibility of reasonable doubt, which are the best stocks. Then you have to breed from these solely or at least predominantly; and moreover to do this, starting without compulsory powers. For in present fact compulsion of any kind must rest on consent in some degree or form. Therefore, if Eugenics is to be more than a genial speculation, it must take into account the present mental moral and physical conditions under which our people carry on

that common state-life which we call politics. No one really believes that British citizens, whose past has made them what they are, would at present grant compulsory powers even to the most admired of philanthropic eugenists. For crude equalitarian democracy bars the way, and pessimistic lamentation and reproach is a waste of time. But we may remind ourselves that medical men sometimes attack a malady successfully by an indirect treatment, when a more direct approach is not possible. Now the anthropologist candidly admits that under more comfortable conditions of life the less fit and efficient strains do not multiply with such startling rapidity. This seems to point to a practical and perhaps acceptable means of checking excessive multiplication at one end of the social scale: only downright 'defectives' will need direct treatment in the public interest.

It may be that judicious political action would do much towards solving the problem from the lower end. At the other end of the scale it could hardly give much help; and 'dying off at the top' is perhaps the most serious of all the dangers to which civilization is liable. Any move towards abandonment of 'race-suicide' on the part of the upper (and presumed better) strains must surely be voluntary. And here we are met by the important admission[1] that civilization does impair human qualities that are of value for its own maintenance. It adds to the leisure at men's disposal, and tempts them to misuse it. The evil consequences of such misuse are plainly written[2] in the history of the past: nowhere, it is said, more plainly than in the history of Rome. To Rome I will presently return. Meanwhile we may ask,

[1] McDougall p 40. [2] McDougall pp 37, 172.

is not this pessimistic view of the tendency of civilization virtually a return to old fatalism? For the remedy suggested or implied is nothing but an exhortation to the upper strains of a community to be other than they are. And past experience hardly justifies a simple hope that the mere preaching of such a gospel would be effectual. If there is to be a reasonable and quickening hope of amendment, there must surely be a prospect of finding in existing circumstances some means of making a start. This at once brings us back into touch with politics; for it implies that the machinery for public action must be capable of being set in motion for the public good, and that a free force of public opinion is available to keep it at work. Now in some modern states at least these necessary conditions exist in a remarkable degree, particularly in the United States of America. Herein we may find some antidote to pessimism, though an observer writing from a near view[1] does not at present seem to see much hope of improvement in this matter of relative birth-rate. Still he is not a voice crying in the wilderness. I would only urge that the inquiry into the comparative value of various strains of population may with advantage be carried on for many years. In a country receiving great numbers of alien immigrants such inquiry is confessedly complicated by special difficulties, and the tests applied are perhaps not always final.

Biology

Of the sincerity and high moral value of Professor McDougall's campaign I entertain no doubt; but I find it interesting to compare his alarming utterance with that of an eminent biologist a

[1] McDougall pp 162—3.

few years earlier. To comment on Mr Bateson's views in detail would be out of place here, nor am I competent to undertake the task. But I cannot shirk reference to one or two points. In this striking lecture, starting from a pessimism inspired by the present outlook of existing societies, the author is not content to acquiesce in a mere fatalistic conclusion. He boldly lays down lines on which a regenerative movement may be conducted, distinguishing what is possible from what is impossible in existing society. The principles involved are intimately connected with an analogy between the corporal and social organisms, which is very closely pressed and serious. If this analogy be sound and final, the exact definition of a few terms (such as *element factor part*) in their social application would be a material help to historical students. For this little work contains enough[1] to set any reader thinking; and, if social organisms are to be a subject of study as 'scientific' as biology, the inquirers will need an exact terminology for use.

Here also we find the man of Science no believer in the wisdom of popular governments. Democracy and all its works are anathema. One seems to catch the thoughts of a modern Plato, without that touch of opportunism which we might expect from a modern Aristotle. For the object sought is after all eminently a practical one, the welfare of mankind. Mankind therefore will have to be consulted sooner or later. You may, perhaps justly, despise the masses and their ways: but

[1] 'Neither can we foresee the modes in which the scientific way of looking at all questions may come ultimately to tinge and modify men's habits of thought even in social and political matters.' Bryce, *Studies*, essay IV, vol I p 309.

where is the aristocratic or autocratic power to enable you to dispense with them? Let us not stand aloof from ignoble politics to indulge a lofty pessimism. Let us rather accept provisionally the doctrine[1] that 'the form of a society, like that of an individual, is a consequence of an evolutionary process.' Let us, in contemplating the present, realize that 'to that process experimental interference on an enormous scale is being applied' through our legislative acts. Let us, noting that our acts are causes not void of effect, see to it that they are calculated to produce good effects. In other words, let us recognize the duty of promoting reform by the only available means. So once more we are back again to politics. If we are to discard the exploded heresy that education and general environment suffice to raise superior beings from inferior strains, we must not dally, but use the means at hand and strive to render those means more and more effective by persistent use. To descend into the battlefield of politics, a rude scrimmage of jostling parties and confused ideas, may be very distasteful: but it is better, more human, than the aloofness of the old Stoics. That our acts have consequences is enough to give us assurance that it is too early to despair.

I am not suggesting that Mr Bateson's discourse implies a despairing conclusion. On the contrary, his warning[2] against hasty state interference based on insufficient knowledge is in itself a sign of hope. But I do think that, like that of some other men of Science, his attitude towards democracy is hardly generous. If mankind has so far moved on as to advance, not only in knowledge, but in the will to turn that knowledge to

[1] Bateson p 4. [2] Bateson pp 12—14.

account for the public benefit, how has this come about? Surely the great awakening of popular masses has had something to do with it. As usual, cause and effect work in alternation. The stimulus of growing knowledge works slowly down from class to class. The 'curiosity' of educated men, vividly recorded by Pepys and Evelyn, issues at length in the demand of the modern hand-workers for a larger share of knowledge and its fruits. That some of their own class have achieved intellectual distinction under hard conditions, they know. No wonder then that they incline to crude theories of human equality, and often fancy that only education and a more favourable environment are needed to make Jack as good as his master. The man of Science knows better. He knows (at present) that a physiological fallacy is involved, that man's position in the universe depends[1] on his heterogeneity, which is a 'condition of progress.' He perceives class distinction to be essential, while democracy regards it as evil. He detects the incompatibility of the ideals of socialism with those of democracy, and helps us to clear up our notions by doing so. But he hardly does justice to the service rendered by those who have, however blindly, striven for illusory 'equal rights' or 'equal opportunity.' Ignorant of the true gospel of heredity, they did an imperfect work. Yet at least they forged the only instrument strong enough to do great things. And what is to be done must be great and permanent. Truly is it said[2] that 'casual devotion is no base on which to form a social system.'

[1] Bateson pp 31—2. [2] Bateson p 27.

III

The case of Rome

It is time to turn back and consider the story of Rome from the point of view of these anthropological and biological doctrines. Roughly stated, they assert that the Romans, after an early career of success, failed in the end through a degeneration which for some reason was allowed to run its course. This is much as if we said they failed because, in the given circumstances, they were what they were. To fit the Roman case into this scientific scheme, we must assume that a ruling or leading class controlled the state in the days of its prosperity, that this class perished by 'race-suicide,' and that the ensuing decline was a result of the preponderance of inferior elements of the population in later periods. How far does our knowledge of Roman history justify these assumptions? We must bear in mind that our record, imperfect as it is and often doubtful and meagre, carries us over more than 1000 years. To select and correlate particular phenomena without careful attention to chronological order is surely not a scientific process. Nor must we run any risk of confusing success or prosperity with wide extent of empire: it is the inner soundness, in short the prospective ability to meet the requirements of ever-changing situations, that commands admiration.

That there was in early Rome a nobility of birth, grouped on a clan-system, is agreed. Whatever their origin, tradition credibly represents them as the original citizens, practically the State. To share the privileges of these 'men of descent' (*patricii*) was the aim of the Commons or 'multitude' (*plebes*). After long struggles this

mixed free population gained legal and political equality. Their leading men formed a new order of nobility, based on tenure of office, and eventually coalesced with the old patricians as a recognized Upper Class. The 'new nobility' thus formed may be regarded as a blend of efficient strains, an aristocracy of merit. On the whole they appear to have carried on the government well. So far as we can judge from our tradition, they were genuinely 'Roman' in character: that is, they produced no men of striking genius in peace or war, but plenty of honest patriots, painstaking and competent, a type inspiring confidence and respect. It was to such leaders that the Roman policy of alliances was due, and without that judicious system of graded privilege Rome could hardly have become the mistress of Italy. But we must never lose sight of the fundamental difference between Rome and her Italian rivals. Rome was a city unit of a very peculiar kind. Expanding by incorporating neighbour communities in her own body, a process to which antiquity offers no real parallel, she remained one city-state. Thus accessions of population were immediate increases of strength. Under the officers of a single government, Roman forces could be mobilized quickly and on a Roman model. This in an age of conflict gave her a great advantage over adversaries more or less loosely organized in leagues of towns or cantons, whose prompt and effective action was often hindered by divergent interests or jealousy. As she advanced, and the efficiency of her system became more manifest, it became easier also to win allies and generally to draw the treaties of alliance in favour of Rome. The earlier stages of this policy built up a power so solid and so

elastic that even the Samnites and Pyrrhus could not shake it in the later stages. But it was wielded by a city government, a commonwealth (*res publica*) which, while it avoided the risks inherent in personal monarchy, depended for the support of its moral authority on the free and steady cooperation of its citizens. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the centralization[1] of government in the city whose franchise (*civitas*) Romans (far or near) enjoyed. It was this that carried Rome foward to dominion in her early days; this that, after a certain stage was reached, broke down as an expression of the citizens' will for the common good.

I have sketched on a former page the process by which this political failure came about, and the Senate gradually engrossed the real powers of government. I have referred to the temptations under which the senatorial nobility lost the virtues that were at first the practical justification of their rule. But those virtues did not die out suddenly. They saw Rome safe through the struggle with Carthage, and we can hardly detect a serious decline until the battle of Pydna (168 BC) had made an end of Mediterranean rivalry. It is probably true that after 200 BC frequent intercourse with the Hellenized East brought unwholesome influences to bear on the Roman upper class. But the opposition was sturdy, and I do not think we have ground for dating the practice[2] of so-called 'race-suicide' from the

[1] See Furneaux on Tac *ann* XIII 48—9, XIV 17. (58—9 AD). Also III 47 § 2. (21 AD).

[2] There were signs of it, as we may see from the speech of Metellus the censor of 131 BC. But this was the utterance of a strong Opposition partisan. See references in Wordsworth's *Specimens* p 631.

second century BC. The seeds of evil were being sown, no doubt. But in a period of ever widening opportunities the nobles, greedy and grasping, were in some degree saved from utter degeneracy by the stimulus of their own ambitions. They were still on the whole a manly crew, and they bore themselves bravely in the time of civil wars and proscriptions. Once the Republic and its revolutionary turmoil were ended, a very different scene presents itself in Roman society. Of the real aristocratic houses[1] few survived, and to recruit their ranks by promoting financiers and other adventurers was not to revive the old vigour which had so often shewn itself in turbulence and disorder. Under a quiet but irresistible suppression there was no room for free political movement, good or evil. Tradition pointed to public activity of some kind as the appropriate sphere in which men of wealth and station should employ their energies; but to follow that tradition would now probably mean futile effort, not improbably personal danger. Augustus the 'first citizen' (*princeps*) might pose as the genial restorer of the genuine Republic. But all men knew by what methods he had attained a virtually supreme power, and that merciful scruple had not been one of them.

Now began in earnest the moral degradation of the Roman upper classes[2] on which students of society are only too inclined to dwell. The calm but despondent

[1] See some statistics cited by Tenney Frank p 153 from an article by Stech.

[2] From endless references to the Roman nobles and their degeneracy I may select Tac *ann* III 55, 65, VI 4 (10), 7 (13), 10 (16), 26 (32), XIII 18, 34, XIV 12, 14, 40, 47, 57, XV 35, 48.

bitterness of Tacitus and the fierce rhetoric of Juvenal hold the field, and literature has too often contented itself with reproducing their pictures of foolish protests and all-pervading depravity. We need not question the main facts of this record. One-sided and exaggerated it no doubt is, but on the whole true. Seneca, Lucan, Petronius, even Columella and others, confirm it in their several ways; and the early stages of the process did not escape the laughing censure of Horace. But what really concerns us here is to account for the contemptuous and bitter tone of most of these utterances. It is not only despair: it is often disappointment. Indeed it must have been hard for a Roman observer, Italian-born or not, to face the one sure conclusion from contemporary facts. In a Rome confessedly the centre of the civilized world, a Rome the focus of personal ambitions, a Rome yearly increasing in material splendour, was it easy to admit, and to acquiesce in the admission, that the Roman People was dead? Possession of the coveted franchise of the city was a sentimental link with a past in which the Roman citizen had counted for something, and might by his own action possibly count for a great deal. To a man of wealth and station, this potential rise to eminence, even though never realized, had been a comfortable feeling. And meanwhile he had been free to express his opinions in the Senate and to give a vote according to his judgment, right or wrong. The impotence of the individual citizen, let him be ever so well qualified and sincere, was now manifest. He must assent to the policy of one at whose back were the standing armies—or take the consequences. Can we wonder that men who started

life with any self-respect often tried to avoid a servile complaisance by standing aloof from public affairs?

Now such voluntary retirement on the part of a Roman noble left him with much time on his hands. And a man with a large household of slaves and no evident occupation might be, and sometimes was, up to no good. Conspiracies did sometimes occur, and were more often suspected, and the earlier emperors were uneasy. The law of treason was extended, and informers drove a thriving trade. But a spendthrift debauchee apparently absorbed in his vices was not likely to alarm the most nervous emperor. On the other hand, the accumulation of a vast fortune might provoke the greed of a bad one. Under all these influences many of the upper class lived for the passing day and sank into depravity. For them the general outlook was no encouragement to rear children, and 'race-suicide' became common. How far we should see in this a grave calamity to Rome and Romans, is not easy to determine. We cannot appraise with any approach to exactitude the social value of the upper class, supposing them to have remained uncorrupted and socially efficient. As patrons of the poorer class, a mean parasitic rabble of cringing dependants, their existence was surely no benefit: political value they had none.

We must not however forget that there were others, men of a different type. Men, that is, who took things as they found them, and did not shrink from such public service as the circumstances of the age required. Accepting the Empire as a necessity, they saw open to them a career of useful activity in one or other of the

civil or military departments. The old disorder of the Republic had to go, and there was a demand for competent officials who should protect and administer the empire. They must be content to work loyally under a supreme ruler, and so on the whole they did. Varro, the elder Pliny, Frontinus, are specimens of this type. Two of these three were great students, all were authors of solid works. Later, in Trajan's time, we have the younger Pliny, also a literary man, employed in special administrative duty. These men had laid aside republican tradition and 'did their bit' as public servants, a valuable asset of the imperial system. But that such characters were numerous, or that they were able to influence policy for the general good of society, is hardly to be affirmed. The bureaucratic machinery, mainly developed by the skill of oriental Greek freedmen belonging to the household of an emperor, has been referred to above. In the long run it prevailed, and its technical perfection was a proof that the old Roman principle, the sufficient competence of a Roman citizen to discharge any public duty assigned him, was at last abandoned.

So, all things considered, I cannot hold it satisfactorily made out[1] that the decay of Rome should be classified as a race-suicide. When we come upon phenomena of the kind, Roman society was already thinned out in its upper ranks, and living under conditions that remind

[1] Something may be said for the effect of the decay of old religious motives for large families (Tenney Frank p 154). But Cato's loan of his wife to Hortensius for breeding purposes indicates that they were not extinct in the last days of the Republic, though dying fast.

us of captivity, in which some animals are loth to breed. These conditions were the consequence of political defects which had for centuries been neutralizing the merits of the Roman people. It was a fatal defect, and always will be a fatal defect, when the constitution of a community is based on popular sovranty lacking means of regular expression. But if this defect had serious results, paralysing the action of the popular will and eventually corrupting the *de facto* administration of the Senate, it is also true that the defect was itself the result of human shortcoming. It was an effect that became a cause. The early Romans found (or drifted into) a way of expansion that soon led them to a point at which a city-constitution was no longer adequate as a machine of government. It became a hopeless tangle, and from this tangle they were never able to extricate themselves. To blame their early statesmen for not having devised means by which the sovran people might regularly bear a hand in their own good government, would be absurd. The fact that in their given circumstances they were what they were, is a fixed point to start from. If our tradition is of any value, the Roman People of (say) the fifth and sixth centuries BC were in general a stolid and patient folk, caring more for the assurance of their personal wellbeing than for the pursuit of political ideals. The same temperamental difference that made Roman seditions less violent than those in the cities of Greece also tended to make them defer, and if possible avoid, constitutional experiment. We can now see that in extending her city franchise far and wide early Rome attempted what could never have been made to work as a regular system. But we

must remember that the extension occurred bit by bit, and so probably passed unregarded, or at least unresisted, by contemporaries.

The consequences of this policy, or rather drifting, were inevitable. After proving that a great empire could be built up without an Emperor, the Republic shewed itself unable to rule and guide that empire in the ways of prosperity and peace. Once rival ambitions took to the sword as a weapon of civic debate, the Free State was at an end. It only remained to find the necessary Emperor. But the position of a ruler stepping into power after the failure of the Republic was far more difficult than it would have been if monarchy had been continuous. If the genuine relics of the aristocracy, the real old noble houses, were few, they were none the less inclined to set store by a social preeminence now rare. And long centuries of tradition sustained[1] their family pride. To them it was a cruel blow, perhaps felt more severely after a short experience than in the first stunning moment, that their pride was henceforth not to be renewed in political action, and must be fain to rest on memories. Losing the glow of effective public life in Rome, they could not but degenerate. And it was not their fault that they had been brought to such a pass. They were paying, as successors do, for the shortcomings of their predecessors. That they writhed under the yoke, and that emperors found it no easy matter to keep them harmless and loyal, is no wonder. After the death of Domitian in

[1] Tenney Frank p 116, speaking of racial qualities, says 'In the old Roman noble that inheritance was not so diluted that his *virtus* did not quickly respond to the appeal of ancestral memories.'

96 AD things took a better turn till the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180. But by that time the senatorial nobles were tamed, and had all grown up under the new conditions, while the emperors were too firmly seated to be nervous. There was a senatorial nobility for centuries yet, ready to seize occasional opportunities of overstepping the bounds of their normal servility: but only the name connected them with the former lords of Rome.

Effect of withdrawal from public life

I may seem to be laying too much stress on the depressing effect of exclusion from active political life. Perhaps I am. But let me point out that what galls a man is not the abstinence from action but the inhibition of the will to act. There will always be some who from inertness or suspended judgment prefer to stand aside. But to do so from conviction of the futility or danger of taking an active part is a position that destroys self-respect[1] and is apt to become downright maddening. In such an atmosphere some of the highest natures are likely to lose their balance. Some in despair will sink into a life of dreary debauchery: others will make a frantic bid for assertion of an obsolete freedom; sure to perish, but fain to perish with glory. These phenomena were rife in Rome during the first century of the Empire. That they were localized in Rome was because Rome was the centre[2] of the civilized world. For an illustration of much the same result, but not concentrated in one place, we have not to look far. The Greeks of old

[1] Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad. Eccl 7 § 7.

[2] Partly also because, owing to the wide control of the empire, there was no safe and civilized resort open to voluntary exiles.

Hellas, a more high-strung and gifted race than the so-called 'Romans,' in the days of their glorious bloom spent a great part of their energies in mutual destruction. A sad pity, indeed. Yet the keen political life in the little autonomous states was surely a most efficient influence in preserving their vitality. Particularism, though it prevented national union and ended in the loss of Greek freedom, kept alive a particular patriotism in the several states. A warm interest in the affairs of their own city, though often unwisely shewn, was a wholesome check on degeneration. The citizen had some politics, especially foreign politics. Once a state ceased to have a free hand in its own policy, especially in its external relations, this public interest was gone. Home politics tended to become a scramble, the poor squeezing the rich, the rich looking outside to the dominant Great Power for protection. The next stage, when freedom of public action was clearly lost for good and all, brings us to the Greece of which Polybius has left us a distressing picture. Apathy, wantonness, race-suicide in an acute form, are its main features. Nor need we confine our view to ancient times. Perhaps one of the merits of Representative institutions has been that even in corruption they have kept open the possibility that they might some day enable a common citizen to give some expression to his views.

Nationality

That the nature of man impels him to live in community, not merely as the result of bodily needs, was first clearly discerned and stated by Aristotle. Yet, though he also saw the weakness entailed by Greek disunion, and was convinced of the superior qualities of the Greek race, he does not appear

to have advocated any plan for securing their common future through union. And in fact no Greek nation was formed. To turn to Rome. Conquests and incorporations added to the mass of the Roman state, but created nothing that can fairly be called a Roman nation. Nations are not to be made by mere inclusion in this or that political unit, not even when the peoples included have considerable affinity in race and speech. An assimilation has to take place, to produce the necessary solidarity, the habit of looking at things from the same point of view. Nearly all modern nations[1] illustrate this. And this assimilation takes effect most readily and most vitally when the parties concerned are on an equal footing or very nearly so. Hence we can, without too imaginative straining of a dim record, detect assimilative influence in the early period of Roman expansion in Italy. But we cannot trace it far. All Italy did not even receive the Roman franchise until after the great Italian war of 90—89 BC. And this did not make an Italian nation: it enlarged a Roman political unit, long after that unit had ceased to have any sound political life of its own. It admitted Italian Allies to share the Roman heritage, and that heritage was already a vast foreign dominion. Those Italians who came to the front in public life had openings hitherto denied them, but their eyes were drawn to prospects of advantages abroad. Italy was merged in Rome, not Rome in Italy: Rome was becoming more and more a cosmopolitan centre: true national feeling in the peninsula

[1] 'The sentiment of Nationality, a sentiment comparatively weak in the ancient world and in the Middle Ages.' Bryce, *Studies*, essay IV, vol I p 268.

could not develope in competition with the profitable prestige of belonging to the imperial city.

Assimilation and penetration

This matter of assimilation is important from my point of view. It should be noted that, once Rome controlled a transmarine and transalpine empire, her assimilative action, where operative, was an influence from above. The conquerors desired to carry on the exploitation of their subjects in peace. Official policy and private enterprise instinctively combined in pursuit of a common end. A thin veener of civilization soon spread over southern Gaul, and even refractory Spain was at last largely Romanized. But in the time of the Republic the process had not gone far, and was confined chiefly to the few town centres from which Roman settlers carried on trading and financial operations under protection of the governors' courts. Enterprising traders pushed on in advance of actual Roman annexation, and the movement was extended[1] under the Empire. The civilization thus propagated was not an old-fashioned Roman product, but rather the cosmopolitan blend now prevailing in Italy under the influence of ideas and habits imported from Greece and the East. The Rome of Sulla and Julius Caesar, of Cicero and Lucullus, was well able to impress the rude peoples of the West with its superiority, but the charm that made its civilization attractive to barbarians was in no small degree due to its borrowed elements. Rome was rather a carrier than a creator, and the stream of subtle influence flowed on from East to West. Now this Greek penetration was not the

[1] Even to Ireland. Tac *Agr* 24.

work of free and glorious Greece, but of 'Hellenistic' Greeks, often only half-breeds, who came from cities either founded by Alexander and his successors or absorbed in their dominions. Favoured by kings who knew how to value their capability and suppleness, they throve and multiplied: and the qualities that earned them this favour found a ready market in Rome and Italy. I need not dwell on this familiar topic. For my present purpose the important point is that these Greeks came into Roman life almost entirely as dependants, if not actual slaves. Their penetration of Roman society was from below, and it was penetration indeed. We can form some notion of its extension: of the depth of its influence in modifying Roman character, only an adventurous guess. How far the subtle assimilation went, and whether its effects can be traced in any definite way in the later fortunes of Rome, is a question to which I have no answer beyond the usual generalities.

Municipal system

If I must hazard some suggestions, I would start from a negative position. Old Roman civilization and its influences had been narrow and hard, but at the back of it there was always a tacit assumption that the citizen was an active member of the state, a responsible man. True, the call of public duties, such as military service, was frequent; while the opportunities of using public rights, such as voting, were rare. Yet tradition said (and to dispute it is rash) that the farmer-citizens of old did not shrink from loyal self-sacrifice. The civilization and influences carried by Roman arms and enterprise into western Europe had at its back an assumption that a Roman citizen

was superior[1] to the native population around him, and entitled to a high standard of personal comfort and security. For his security he looked to the imperial government, in which he had no voice. His own politics, such as they were, were only municipal, and his attitude towards them was more and more regulated by his own selfish interests. A wish to be popular led him at times to acts of munificence or charity. And, so long as all seemed secure, there was not much to ruffle a life of ease and local dignity. But communities such as I conceive these provincial cities to have been were surely no nurseries[2] of Roman strength. From the military point of view a walled city might serve as a base and a depot, but it was almost certain to be a poor recruiting-ground. It was rather a place to be defended than a means of defence. Financially, it was a convenient centre for collection of imperial taxes within a given district. But it is not clear that many cities were important centres of production; production, that is, of goods destined for outside markets. Manufacturing on any considerable scale almost inevitably meant employment of slave-labour, and the presence of many slaves was hardly an unmixed benefit to a community. Municipal government was in the hands of the men of means,

[1] See the extreme case of the colony Camulodunum, Tac *ann* XIV 31—3.

[2] I cannot agree that these cities of the West were 'centers of Roman civilization from which the Empire long drew heavily for sturdy citizens.' (Tenney Frank p 273.) Of course literary men came thence to Rome, especially from Spain. That Roman observers understood what was the effect of the civilization propagated in the West is clear from Tacitus *Agr* 21, 11. In *annals* III 46, XI 18, he notes the decay of military qualities in Gaul.

and these, in the quiet times of the first two centuries of the Empire, unsuspecting of future disturbance, generally enjoyed luxury and ease. And all the while the Barbarians beyond the frontiers were growing in numbers. Their rude agriculture could not supply enough food to satisfy them, and they envied (and doubtless exaggerated) the plenty prevailing in Roman lands. Sooner or later they would be tempted to win a share of Roman abundance by the sword. How in the end they broke the barriers and became masters of Gaul and Spain, is a well-known story. Frontier armies could not hold them at bay for ever, and the unmanned and helpless provincials were no serious obstacle.

The West

So the imperial fabric broke down in the West. Why? No doubt from several cooperating causes. But I believe none of these was more general and more effective than the artificial nature of the civilization introduced under Roman rule. Essentially urban, it was planted in countries whose native organization was tribal. Cities grew rather as Roman centres than as developments of local economic activity. Bodies of native population were urbanized and Romanized, and the cities imitated Rome. And this at a time when the social atmosphere of Rome was not a wholesome model. Extension of the Roman franchise[1] to their burghers could not add to their inner strength: it only recorded the fact that so many more individuals were admitted to the ranks of a community that was trying

[1] That some even became Roman Senators, we know. Tacitus *ann* III 55 notes their sobering influence in Rome. But that they could influence the government I see no proof, and their *parsimonia* was for their own profit.

to dissemble present nullity and servitude by thinking itself a ruling people—in fact by vainly recalling a glorious past. No national inspiration could be derived from Rome, and Rome had extinguished other possibilities of national growth for so long as she remained supreme. She had indeed divided her subjects and ruled them by division. The 'Rome' of the middle and later Empire was a mechanical and lifeless supremacy, only kept going by the energy of occasional emperors, using barbarian armies to repel barbarian invaders. But this, as I have remarked above, was largely the natural result of political defects which can be traced back to the early days when Rome conquered Italy.

The East

Why do we not meet with the same phenomena in the East? The answer to this is perhaps clearer. In the East the establishment of kingdoms had simplified the process of Roman conquest. The overthrow of a King placed at the disposal of Rome a large unit of territory, with a population already used to arbitrary control and to transference from one monarch to another. Urban civilization was ancient, and may almost be called indigenous. Moreover the East was, compared with the West, industrial: it produced much for export, and its financial position was vastly stronger. Hence its ability to recover from the ravages of wars, and even from the gross misgovernment of Republican Rome. Hence in later days, when the empire broke up in the West, the eastern part long survived. Constantine had provided it with a capital on a site far better than that of the old Rome, and the absolute monarchy of the Constantinopolitan emperors

suited the peoples under their sway far better than had ever been the case with the peoples of the West. For centuries Asia Minor and Egypt remained preeminent in the Roman world as lands the resources of which were most fully developed, and from which it was possible to draw material maintenance for a stable government. Despite the assaults of Barbarians from the North and the revived Persian monarchy on the East, it only perished through the coming of the Turks.

A moral

The contrast is significant, and perhaps it is not unfair to draw from it a moral. It seems, at least as an illustration, to support the view that political institutions are of supreme importance to the peoples whose lot it is to live under them. It suggests that they are in practice good or bad according as they fit the subjects[1]—the old story of the shoe. If the Roman People, with many fine qualities, could not invent a political system suited to develope on sound lines the cruder and more backward portion of their conquests, they had failed, and must therefore take the consequences. They had achieved great things, but not the one thing most necessary. To blame them is absurd: you might as well twit them with not inventing the telephone. But the fashionable admiration of Roman imperialism seems to me overdrawn; that is, if we regard a great imperial system as intended to promote lasting vigour and happiness within its domain, and not

[1] 'Hamilton remarks in one of his letters that he holds with Montesquieu that a nation's form of government ought to be fitted to it as a suit of clothes is fitted to its wearer. He would doubtless have added that one cannot make sure of the fit until the suit has been tried on.' Bryce, *Studies*, essay VI, vol. I p 397.

merely to guard the frontiers. Faced with two problems, Rome was fairly successful in adapting what she found to hand in eastern lands: in the West she had to create a new fabric, and the experiment was not really a success.

Case of scattered Romans

I have been speaking of Roman race-failure, both as a phenomenon of the upper classes of Roman society in Rome, and also of the Romans scattered over the Roman world. By these latter I mean Roman citizens by franchise. They were not all of Italian descent, and extensions of the franchise under the earlier emperors soon rendered the blood-union insignificant, and established union by civilization in its stead. This process, though in full harmony with the earliest traditions of Rome, conveyed no political power. But, if we begin to discuss race-failure under the scientific patronage of biologists, surely this wholesale blending of stocks presents to us a serious difficulty. I see nothing ahead but a series of conjectures based on small evidence. I can offer but a slight indirect contribution towards a result which seems likely to remain a matter of various opinions. It is the question, how far the settlement of Romans (Italians) abroad was an effective means of disseminating the solid qualities by which Rome had risen to greatness, that I try to answer. Did the Provinces gain thereby in vital strength, social, moral, economic? The structure of the imperial fabric forbids us to look for political strength. What then of Roman emigration?

It is admitted that Romans who settled in Greece and the East soon became 'Hellenized'; that is, they fell into the ways of the later Greek civilization, and

ceased to be an effectively Romanizing influence. It is also pointed out that, in the earlier[1] days of Rome's eastward advance, there is reason to think[2] that many if not most of these emigrants came from the southern parts of Italy, where much Greek was still spoken and Greek habits had not died out. Such persons were an useful link for business and administrative purposes between East and West. As we know that the East was never Romanized—indeed it became further Hellenized under Roman sway—it is hardly necessary to pursue this section of the subject further. It is not in the East that we must seek the Roman causes of Roman decline.

Emigration

From such evidence as we have to guide us, I conclude that it was wholly directed to exploitation of Provincial resources for the benefit of Roman or Italian individuals. I can detect no sign of emigration of Italian labour seeking a Provincial labour-market. If this conclusion be just, the movement was strikingly different from that of modern times, in which the emigration of labour plays an important part. That the Roman citizens resident in any assize-district (*conventus*) were recognized as a superior element of the local population, whose views had weight with the Governor, and whom he employed at need as jurors or as the nucleus of a military force, does not point to a class of emigrant labourers. Vast numbers found openings in financial or other business. In some Provinces old soldiers settled down. But all seem to have been directors of labour in some form

[1] Say the second century BC.

[2] See Tenney Frank pp 109, 155.

or other,—the labour of provincials or slaves. And that the great majority of these settlers lived in the cities does not appear to admit reasonable doubt.

The movement began with the formation of Provinces, and reached its height in the second and first centuries BC. That is, it coincided with the period in which the agricultural system of Italy was (in a large part of the country) transformed. The absorption of small holdings by large, and the failure of attempts to evade the consequences by legislation to stay or reverse the process, left numbers of men without any prospect of success at home. Surely these did not all (though many did) drift into Rome and add to urban pauperdom. Those who went abroad were probably above the average in vigour and enterprise; a loss to Italy, but a gain to the Provinces, if only they developed (without exhausting) the local resources, and did not themselves degenerate. There is no reason to think that they were as a rule penniless men, and we may fairly assume that they went out to better themselves. But, as I have pointed out, they were tempted to achieve this at the expense of the Provincials, and so they did.

Moreover they came from a country in which slavery was more and more becoming the basis of civilization. The enjoyment of ease and luxury, the fruit of wealth wrung from servile labour, was becoming characteristic of Romans in Italy. We can hardly suppose that in such a social atmosphere the scrupulous Roman went abroad in quest of a higher life of wholesome simplicity. It is a more likely guess that in going he hoped to win for himself similar comforts on a smaller scale. And the soldier-settler too might well have hesitated on

discharge to return to Italy. There he would be nobody: in the Province[1] he saw his way to become somebody. Why not take a wife of the daughters of the people, and settle down? Now it is to be imagined that the first generation of these various settlers did not at once lose their tough 'Roman' character, whatever their occupations might be. We are therefore not surprised when we come upon traces of their activity, for instance even in the great civil war that ended the Republic. Such men were numerous, particularly in Cisalpine Gaul (the plain of the Po-country) whence great armies were raised. But the Italian municipalities were already so far effete as to disappoint the hopes of Cicero and others who relied on their support in the cause of the Republic. The propertied classes, who controlled them, wanted freedom to work their will in their own localities, and kept up relations with aristocrats in Rome. But for this freedom they were not prepared to fight, and the civil war swept over them without serious check. I believe that similar phenomena occurred again later in the Provincial cities from similar causes, the new Empire having created a sense of organized security within the Roman borders. Feeling safe, and having no imperial responsibility, they lost consciousness of imperial duty. Roman citizens, whether descendants of Roman settlers or enfranchised natives and half-breeds, were numerous. Under the early empire these Provincial Romans filled the ranks of the legions. But as time went on the Roman element was more and more superseded by alien recruits, granted

[1] Under the later Empire the *veterani* or *milites* were a very important element of Provincial society.

citizenship for the purpose; under the later Empire they were nearly all of barbarian stock. Why was this? I think, because the 'Roman' stock was decaying, probably in numbers, certainly in the manly qualities needed for retaining the 'Roman' supremacy. This I attribute to the effects of 'Roman' civilization on the Provincial cities, effects arising from antecedent causes, and not fairly to be treated as isolated facts.

Freedmen

On one subject all writers are agreed, that the change of human stock brought about by manumission of slaves was very great[1] in the Roman world. Freedmen and their descendants abounded, and the manumitted slave became a citizen. But it may be asked, why should this necessarily be a degradation of the Roman stock? Prisoners of war and other rough labour-units would generally be used for heavy rustic work, and it seems that these very seldom, if ever, gained their freedom. It is to the cases of professional or skilled workers and favoured domestics that we must look for an answer. The answer surely is that the failing ranks of true-born Romans needed to be recruited from the manliest classes of mankind, high-spirited beings; if possible, with good racial traditions. Now manumissions normally added clever and supple beings to the citizen body, and these additions did not bring with them the qualities[2] most needed for the safety and wellbeing of the empire. That slaves were more or less a selected class, each one necessarily having some value,

[1] See Tac *ann* XIII 27 etc.

[2] Tenney Frank pp 119—2 sees in the change of stock a main cause of revolution through bloodshed superseding reform through orderly compromise in the Republic. This seems to me too strong, if true at all.

while the native free citizen was just what he might chance to be (no doubt in some cases worthless), was of no avail. For slaves, particularly those who earned freedom and left families, were chosen on principles that gave little hope of producing by their enfranchisement a manly and honourable class of 'Romans.' In the decaying empire no phenomenon is more striking than the growth of nervous legislation frantically directed against abuses, law after law only serving to prove evasion in the past, and destined to be evaded in its turn. I do not think we do any injustice if we see in this pitiful spectacle a result of the prevalence of servile elements in the machinery of government, the civil service of the Roman empire. No corrective in the form of public opinion existed: each man accepted the inevitable, only taking due precautions to save his own skin. A Roman people, with Roman spirit and traditions, was itself but a bare tradition of a distant past.

Corruption of the Roman stock

That this sort of thing should continue, protected by the sword of barbarian armies, was a tragic absurdity, and nothing but the disunion of barbarian enemies enabled it to go on so long. Surely the situation was the outcome of a long series of causes, operative through many centuries, from the days when the origins of Rome are wrapped in folds of legend. In this series race-suicide takes its place, first as an effect, then as a cause. However intense it may have been in a given period, to appraise the importance of its effect is peculiarly difficult. For we are not justified in describing either the old Roman nobility or the old Roman people in the mass as a pure stock.

To do so is to disregard tradition without sufficient authority. Incorporation of aliens meets us from the first in Roman legends, and this practice is the more credible as helping to illustrate and account for the early expansion of the Roman state. No doubt the incorporation of neighbouring peoples, some of them kindred by blood, may at first have strengthened rather than weakened 'Roman' qualities. But even of these peoples some were not kindred, some but indirectly so. Manumissions can hardly have had much dilutive effect before the middle of the second century BC, perhaps not till later. Once they became numerous, the effect was great and irresistible. Year by year a mass of freedmen became Romans. In soundness of body they may on the average have been equal or even superior to the native citizens. In moral equipment they started with a disadvantage. Hitherto they had enjoyed no legal freedom for the exercise of individual will: they still owed services and deference to their former owners: and they were no longer young. In freedmen's households a tradition of independence and virile duty could not easily arise. Yet we have no reason to suppose that the freedmen and their sons formed a refractory element in political life, unable to blend harmoniously with the native citizens. Under the Republic we hear of efforts to restrict their voting-power. But the ground alleged for this restriction was that they were too much under the influence of their patrons, not that they were in themselves bad citizens. And to keep them permanently in an inferior position was practically impossible, as their descendants were free-born, and the marks of servile origin gradually died out.

That the Roman Plebs, steadily recruited on such principles inherited from the past, was a mongrel rabble under the Empire, quite useless for any rational political purpose, is no wonder. But this did not matter much; politics were at an end. That much the same conditions prevailed in urban centres abroad, is at least probable. But the municipalities were concerned only with their local affairs; so this too was of no political importance. Socially, all the Roman world inevitably suffered from the lack of any national feeling, of any stimulus to evoke independent judgment. Wealth was now the only distinction between man and man. How to gain it, to keep it, to make it go as far as possible, was the remaining ambition; and under Roman rule the wealthy were everywhere in power and made full use of their opportunities. Of such a state of things race-suicide (if we can speak of *race* in this connexion) and legacy-hunting were common phenomena. But they did not appear suddenly out of nothing. They were effects of the past. Of the palsied impotence that brought about the fall of the empire they were contributory causes.

Race

It is time to ask a question that cannot be shirked. Why need anyone, looking from the historian's point of view, be troubled by an allegation that race-suicide was the cause of the Roman decline and fall? Is there not evidence of the fact? True, in a sense there is. That the Barbarians were gaining on the 'Romans' owing to their much greater fertility, no student of the Empire will deny. The trouble arises from the word *race*, which in the mouths of Men of Science has definite implications. Until we are agreed as to the racial composition of Romans or

of the Roman ruling class, and can fix some approximate date as the time at which it can be held racially characteristic, we are talking at large. For the purposes of Science this will not do. And historians may well feel uneasy. For it is certain that present interpretations of past events not only affect later interpretations, but have a disturbing influence on inquiry. If Roman history is to be written as a racial problem, we must begin by ascertaining clearly what we mean by the Roman race.

Some modern questions in illustration

I venture to add a few words on some striking situations of the present moment. From wide differences of detail they cannot be offered as analogous to the Roman case. But they may serve very well to illustrate the point of view from which I have been considering the fortunes of Rome. Is there in all human history a series of events more clearly displaying the fatal consequences of initial blunders than the past policy of England in Ireland? I am not going to recount the dismal story. Suffice it that mishandling of the religious question made it impossible to anglicize either the old native Irish or the cross-breeds assimilated to them, while English policy, wavering and half-hearted for some three or four hundred years, has rested on the assumption that effective anglicizing was only a question of time. Measures have followed measures, all more or less well-meant. And now inevitable surrender to a pressure which time has only matured to a higher pitch of organization serves to confess a lamentable truth. The institutions set up in Ireland have all along been a misfit. Conquest never extinguished racial antipathy. Government, seldom really efficient, was always irritating. Never subdued

in spirit, the mass of Irish never sank into the dull acquiescent helplessness of Roman provincials. So now in the twentieth century England has to withdraw from an untenable position, and accept new relations the outcome of which no man can forecast.

In the Irish case we are driven to hope that this change of relations has not been made too late. In those of India and Egypt we may be pardoned for hoping that recent concessions are not premature. In England it has taken us something like a thousand years to reach our present capacity for working a popular government. We are a slow people; but there are grounds for thinking that popular government grows best when it grows slowly. It implies experiment, and procedure by experiment postulates time. Clever though the educated Oriental may be, he has not at his back the steadying traditions of alternating success and failure, that are the modern Englishman's heritage. Handed down from generation to generation, these have so to speak passed into the blood and have hitherto saved us from stagnant decay and destructive revolution. Can such an influence be artificially cultivated in a brief period of years, or extemporized at will? The next generation may perhaps see answers to these questions. At present the glow of a warm-hearted policy brightens the hopes of those who rely on the effect of generosity. But good intentions have sometimes miscarried in the past, and a political misfit may vitiate the best intentions in the future.

Such considerations as these, and others not less sincere, will no doubt be present to the minds of those whose duty it is to decide issues of public importance.

I only offer them here as a sort of collateral justification or excuse for the line I am taking in reference to the failure of Rome. There was at one time a tendency to exaggerate the influence of political institutions on the welfare of mankind. Reaction ensued, and was neatly summed up in the oft-quoted couplet of Pope. There was a half-truth in either view. And nowadays anthropology and biology come forward with new methods of solving problems to the vital importance of which the human race is just awaking. That this new learning is destined to be of immense service to mankind, I do not doubt. But it cannot escape the necessity of being to some extent destructive: it has to clear the ground by convicting History (as hitherto written) of insufficiency. Historians will have to sit at the feet of the Man of Science, and apply profounder doctrines in their criticism of human achievements and possibilities, past as well as present. A harmony is needed, between what has been a department of Literature and the sacred ministry of Science. This does not imply the extinction of History as Literature, but rather its ready adoption of correctives, to check easy interpretation and make writers take into account influences hitherto undetected or ignored. But hasty conclusions are no monopoly of the literary man. The man of Science too may well move slowly outside the boundaries of his own special province.

Race-suicide and Rome

Take the matter of 'race-suicide.' On this subject the warnings and predictions of men of Science deserve the fullest attention and respect. Translate these doctrines into criticism of the past, and they need to be strictly questioned before

acceptance. There is a real danger lest a theory may prevail because it offers an explanation of well-known facts, and on that ground claims attention. But its attractive simplicity may be partly due to imperfect statement of the facts selected, partly to insufficient recognition of other facts. For instance, we may find evidence of 'race-suicide' in the Roman world (not in Rome only). If we treat this phenomenon as a cause, let us not view it as an isolated one. Surely peoples do not wake up suddenly and vow to stop breeding. The cause in question started as an effect of antecedent causes, and no search will ever lead us back to a cause undoubtedly original. Yet the search for causes is not therefore unprofitable. Everything that helps us to a better understanding of the past has a value in training our eye for observation of the present. Historians may (probably will) never bring what is called Political Science up to the same level of exactitude as is required of Chemistry or Physics. Too large a part of their subject-matter is lost for ever; and, the further back they go into the past, the greater in general is the percentage of loss. In the case of Rome, the very word 'race' raises questions of opinion, which can no longer be finally settled by anything like proof. To define what you mean by 'the Romans' is no easy task. In different generations it would bear different shades of connotation, and by the time you have travelled from the elder Cato to Marcus Aurelius you are in an utterly changed world. Look from the days of the Licinian laws to the system of Diocletian, and you can hardly use the term 'Romans' without an explanatory note. When and where do we find evidence of a reasonably

pure upper 'strain' of Roman society, the failure of which would sufficiently account for the decline of Rome? Perhaps in the original Patricians, whoever they were. But the history of those early days is a mist of legend, and Patrician domination died out in the fourth century BC. The mixed Nobility of the second and first centuries BC were, unless they are grossly misrepresented, a strange body to be considered indispensable to the welfare of any state. No, there is no legitimate short cut[1] to a simple and scientific theory of the causes of Roman decline. To pick out a generation or two of the 'upper' classes, and lay the blame on them, is an arbitrary sentence, and as yet not proven.

A general conclusion

The only means known to us of combating evil and promoting good in a community with any prospect of lasting success lies in the action of the popular will clearly freely and continuously expressed. This is Politics, to bear a part in which is a citizen's duty. Rome is merely an extreme instance of failure from lack of this means of regeneration. Perhaps the failure would have occurred, even had the means been available: but it was not there, and so could not be tried.

This principle is true for all states in all ages, and History, recording endless failures, is one long record of this truth. To improve your citizens, and to interest them in their own real welfare, is the only course that offers a possible means of avoiding the Roman fate.

[1] W R Paterson, *The Nemesis of nations* (1907) p 325, well says 'Rome decayed not from peculiar maladies, but from fundamental causes that had been the ruin of other states.'

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